



## STATE OF CONNECTICUT STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

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### TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE IN OPPOSITION TO HB NO. 5481

March 10, 2014

Statement of Anthony J. Castagno, Chair  
State Elections Enforcement Commission

Good afternoon Senator Musto, Representative Jutilla and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Commission. I am Anthony Castagno, Chair of the State Elections Enforcement Commission. Thank you for your consideration of the State Elections Enforcement Commission's views on this bill.

This bill is of great concern to us as an agency. We do not see how this bill could possibly be in the best interests of the SEEC and other agencies named in Section 8, the employees of these agencies, or the citizens of Connecticut who rely on these independent agencies for the services and protections they afford. It creates an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy and inefficiency that serves no purpose except perhaps to attempt, once again, to consolidate the functions of several independent agencies and to further erode their independence and ability to fulfill their missions.

As you know, in recent years we have had to fight for our continued independence, giving testimony on repeated proposals to consolidate our agency into the Office of Governmental Accountability, strip our agency of its legal staff, as well as proposals to erode our budgetary autonomy and independence and place much of our resources under the control of a political appointee. Not long ago, budget cuts resulted in a 40% reduction in the staffing of our agency. Some of these proposals have become law, others thankfully have been deterred. Testifying against bills that threaten the efficacy and independence of our agency sadly has become routine.

It is unclear how this proposed bill will affect our agency other than that we are included in it and any SEEC employees whose "primary duties" are deemed to involve the conduct of hearings will be removed from our agency. This would result in a further reduction in staffing, and we are still recovering from the last draconian staffing reduction. Because of steps taken after that reduction, Commission staff now is thoroughly integrated, cross-trained and interdependent, and any person who is transferred would leave large gaps in the workflow that have nothing to do with the conduct of hearings.

It also is not clear if any of our staff will even be affected, because it is unclear how it will be determined what the "primary duties" of Commission staff are. How will this be determined?

It is not clear whether this will affect any of the hearings that our agency now conducts. The bill excludes from its purview any matter where the head of the agency, or one or more of the members of a multimember agency, presides at the hearing in a contested case. That describes all of our hearings, which are heard by either the executive director or designated members of the Commission. If this is the case, why are we included in the bill at all?

*Testimony of Anthony J. Castagno, Chair  
State Elections Enforcement Commission  
GAE Committee, March 10, 2014*

Bill 5481 proposes to further diminish our independence and erode our ability to conduct business. The SEEC is working well, working efficiently, and providing significant, timely services to the legislators, statewide officials, and citizens of Connecticut. I urge you to reject this proposal and keep the State Elections Enforcement Commission independent, intact and at the service of the people of Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.